

Session 7 China part 1

Activity 2

Treaty of Versailles and the May 4th Incident

Per the Department of State website

<https://2001-2009.state.gov/r/pa/ho/pubs/fs/90689.htm>

1919: Treaty of Versailles and May Fourth Incident

China had joined the Allies in World War I, partly at U.S. President Woodrow Wilson's urging, and hoped that in return it would regain control over the former German concessions that Japan had seized. However, this hope was not fulfilled by the Treaty of Versailles, due mostly to secret agreements between Japan, Britain, and France to give those territories to Japan. When word of this reached China, on May 4 students gathered for a demonstration at the Tiananmen (Gate of Heavenly Peace) in Beijing, and then stormed the house of a pro-Japanese minister, to express their discontent. This launched the May Fourth Movement, a mostly urban movement that combined cultural and educational reform with rising nationalism and a new energy for thorough political and social transformation. Although some felt betrayed by Wilson for not fulfilling his promises to promote self-determination, many Chinese looked to the United States for models of reform.

Research the May 4th Incident and note whether the student protests were effective. Were there examples when violence was utilized during a protest?

Compare the May 4th protests/riots to more contemporary ones. Which is more effective; peaceful protest or violent riots?

Optionally, focus on the May 4th Incident and Tiananmen Square. Compare the duration, effectiveness, presence or lack of violence, and more to the 1989 protests. What is particularly important about Tiananmen Square for Chinese history?